

**Soft n' Wide, but Intelligent?
Reflections on Intelligence Analysis
for the European Union**

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FIRST DRAFT!!

Introduction

If a widened security concept is to be taken seriously, as the EU has repeatedly stated it does (EU, 2003), this implies that non-traditional security concerns come into focus: pandemics, natural catastrophes, racism and radicalism, and the vulnerability of critical infrastructures. Arguably, the traditional intelligence services within the military and the police are neither analytically nor materially equipped to deal with these challenges, as their expertise lies within the field of violent antagonistic threats - basically concerning war, terrorism and organized crime. To be sure, the latter covers important elements also of the widened security agenda, but it is far from comprehensive, even though intelligence organizations are currently undergoing major change to adapt to the demands of the widened security agenda. Indeed, the current debates on "intelligence reform" were spurred by the September 11 attacks in 2001, and are mainly about how to avoid strategic surprise, rather than how to deal with the wide array of non-traditional (and often non-violent) threats.

Moreover, and matching its widened security approach, the EU is generally presenting itself as a "civilian power", relying on a mix of economic incentives, technical assistance and public diplomacy to further its interests. This is about "the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments. It arises from the attractiveness of a country's culture, political ideals, and policies" (Nye, 2004a:x). Moreover, "Soft power rests on the ability to shape the preferences of others" (Nye, 2004a:5). The spectrum of behavior includes agenda-setting, attraction, and co-option. Nye explicitly separates this from the hard command power, which is based on military and economic resources; yet he does not condemn hard power as generally ineffective or counterproductive, but rather see the two forms of power as complementary to each other.

The empirical aim of this paper is to elaborate the underpinning logic and implications of the EU's approach to security, which we call "soft n' wide". In doing so, we draw on three bodies of literature: security studies (particularly that which elaborate a widened security concept), the soft power literature, and the literature on strategic intelligence. In particular, we explore how IR constructivism can provide insight in an otherwise very rather under theorized field. Constructivism is helpful because, *inter alia*, it focuses on the immaterial factors which arguably constitute the core of the "soft n' wide approach", such as ideas, identity, and norms. Arguably, and contrary to what some critics hold, we consider constructivism to be helpful also for elaborating policy recommendations.

More generally, an aim of this paper is also to contribute to theory-building within intelligence studies. Intelligence studies are extremely poor in terms of attempts to apply and build theory, or extremely weak in terms of theorizing, or generic reasoning altogether (cf. Honig, 2007). This literature is rich on hard-nosed empirical work (cf. Budiansky, 2000; Herman, 2001), detailed historical and contemporary accounts,¹ but contain very little theory - as shown by a quick review of specialized *scholarly journals, such as Intelligence and National Security or the Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*. Works on the EU situation are not an exception (cf. Politi, 1997; Müller-Wille, 2004).

Yet without theoretical ambitions, patterns of continuity and change, as well as of similarity and difference, will largely go unnoticed. Thus it will also be much harder to draw practical lessons from these studies, since the conditions under which they apply are hardly ever clarified or tested. This lack of theorizing - the ability to see the forest beyond the trees - might also say something

¹ A most telling example is the 1962 well known work by Roberta Wholstetter *Pearl Harbour, Warning and Decision* that is still "widely admired by intelligence experts" (Keegan, 2003: 368).

about the recurrent failures of intelligence services to understand and manage the increasing significance of non-traditional threats.

Intelligence studies do share some common theoretical ground with the associated strategic studies - a much wider body of literature. Given the dominance of Realism in the latter, also intelligence studies are dominated by a rather traditional perspective, oriented towards interstate conflict. This is occasionally mistaken as a synonym for "pragmatic" or "down-to-earth", which seems to suit fine for the stick-to-facts officers that staff intelligence services around the world.

This state of affairs is (rather) unproblematic as long as the goal of those officers is to second-guess what a neighbour is doing, in the short term, with its military or diplomats. This is the "tactical" or "operational" intelligence and the focus is on indicators like number (and quality) of military units, tanks artillery, vessels and the like. This stance too has been criticized. Biddle (2004) and Smith (2006), for example, noticed that the obsession of realism with military forces and their hardware as source of power is flawed. Even scholarly research in intelligence is almost as obsessed with Realism and military forces.

We conceive of this paper as a heuristic work aimed at designing a research path that we can develop in details in the future. This paper hence offer two main arguments: (a) that constructivism, as one of the contemporary leading IR schools of thought, is particularly suited for elaborating *strategic* intelligence; (b) strategic intelligence is crucial for those international actors (like the EU) that want to foster their soft power and manage a widened security agenda. In the concluding sections of the paper, we argue that the EU has an unexploited opportunity to build up an intelligence capacity that could focus *inter alia* on the identity and beliefs of potential friends and foes and thus facilitate the development of soft power.

"Strategic" vs. "Tactical" Intelligence

A surprise ("out of the blue") attack is any country's worst nightmare (cf. Betts, 1982; Grabo, 2004). Surprise, one of the long-lasting principles of war, was recommended by Sun Tzu and practiced by Napoleon. Preventing surprise attack is perhaps the main task of intelligence services and it requires substantial forecasting. Forecasting the future is a challenging endeavor, and further the future, more difficult such enterprise is. That is why most of intelligence is, in fact, tactical. That is why it concentrates on "capabilities" and on the "material". After all, the first author that wrote of intelligence, i.e. Sun Tzu, clarified the usefulness of it in *The Art of Warfare*.

Relative gains and the security dilemma from realist theory have become "rules of thumb" for intelligence officers. Nonetheless, when these and other pessimist, realist concepts (e.g. human nature is flawed, anarchy is inevitable and cooperation is for fools) are applied to a more long-term analysis they should be used with a far higher degree of skepticism.²

Intuitively, "strategic" intelligence has to do with painting a grand picture of the adversary, its economic resources, military forces and other useful information. Keegan (2004: 7), for example, simply equates it to a generic "knowledge of the enemy". Pragmatically, to summarize the different levels of intelligence analysis Müller-Wille (2004) proposes a matrix structure like the one reported in table 1:

² A most telling example is that of cooperation among human beings. With his experiments, Axelrod (1984) showed that, in the long run (the "shadow of the future"), cooperation appears to be a stronger strategy for survival than defection. Axelrod's arguments have further been confirmed by recent discoveries (Nowack, 2006) .

Table 1

Level of Analysis	Key actors	Type of Information	Relevant Approaches
Tactical	Special Forces operatives, field agents, humanitarian workers, etc.	Raw information, location of targets and defenses, crime prevention	Realism, pragmatism, Threat assessment, cognitive theories
Operational	Generals, mid-level bureaucrats, diplomats etc	???	Realism, policy analysis, Threat assessment, cognitive theories
Strategic	Decision-makers, cabinets, prime ministers	Making sense of tendencies, perceptions and developing reliable indexes	Constructivism (weak), cognitive theories

(Authors' elaboration on Müller-Wille, 2004)

TO BE COMPLETED

Intelligence Studies: A Constructivist Approach

The most basic concern in intelligence analysis is obviously the identification of security threats - their nature, the conditions under which they occur, probability, and possible consequences. It goes without saying that this involves more than the mere collection of data. The challenge is analyzing data, and more often than not analysis even when data is missing or confusing. Indeed, an inescapable part of intelligence analysis in general and threat analysis in particular, is the interpretation of something or somebody as a threat. This step, going from the observation of certain conditions and then identifying these as threatening to some

core values, is often underestimated, and assumed rather than problematized.

There is still a tendency in intelligence studies, and probably also in the practice of intelligence analysis, to downplay the role of the interpreter, the influx of values, interests and perspectives which steer analysis in one direction rather than another. Though analysts are more or less aware of these factors, it goes against their professional ethos to admit they are not simply making purely objective assessments based only on hard facts.

Emphasizing this interpretative dimension and appreciating that different analysts may identify and value conditions and events in different ways even when looking at the very same data, is a truly constructivist conclusion, but downplayed or simply ignored in rationalistic accounts. This constructivist perspective is particularly pertinent for understanding the widened security agenda, particularly since this did not emerge without overt clashes between "traditionalists" preserving a military-oriented agenda, and "reformers" opening up for a vast array of non-traditional threat conceptions (Buzan, 1991; Sheehan, 2005; Stern, 1995)

A very influential constructivist account of the widened security agenda is the *securitization* approach, developed by the so-called Copenhagen school of security studies, represented mainly by Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver (Buzan et al, 1998; Wæver, 1993). Securitization is the rhetorical act in which something - or somebody - is labelled as an "existential threat" - whether there is data to support this or not (Buzan et al 1998: 24-25). Thus, the identification of threats is not necessarily about the obvious, the most likely, or the most agreed upon.

In addition to the emphasis on how security threats are socially constructed, the novelty of this approach lies in that it elaborates a number of potential consequences of securitization moves. In particular, it is argued, successful securitization (i.e. that which

is accepted by a target audience) implies that the issue is prioritized on the agenda, and moreover that the use of extraordinary measures is legitimated. More specifically, securitization gives access to measures such as secrecy, decision-making which sidesteps "normal" democratic procedures, and most notably the use of force. In a liberal democracy, it is virtually impossible to legitimize such measures without first expressing concerns that "national security" is under threat. The Copenhagen school and its many followers have studied securitization processes in several sectors - the political, the military, the economic, the ecological, and the societal, the latter of which is about perceived threats to national identity (Buzan et al, 1998; Eriksson, 2001; Sheehan, 2005). Indeed, even the selection and classification of sectors can be seen as a social construction: by focusing on one, others are neglected (Eriksson, 1999; Wæver, 1999).

Why, then, is such a constructivist approach helpful in intelligence analysis, and strategic intelligence in particular? Constructivism emphasizes and gives insight into the ideas and identities which shape interests and behaviour (Adler, 2002; Checkel, 1997; Wendt, 1999). The basic argument is that it is not so much material conditions, say poverty or procurement of weapons, which make people act in one way rather than another. Behaviour, whether violent extremism or peaceful deliberation is shaped more by how people perceive the world and what should be done about it (ideas), and particularly by how they perceive their own role in this world (identity). Thus it will not be enough to collect hard facts on material conditions.

Such data is still relevant, but more importantly is how different actors perceive (or even choose to ignore) such data, and how and under what conditions one idea (e.g. global Jihadism) is successful in mobilizing support. Importantly, constructivism argues that as opposed to a traditional rationalistic approach, ideas and

identities cannot be taken for granted, but should rather become the focus of analysis: how do they come about, how do they change, and how do they shape interests and action? This emphasis on ideas and identities is not merely of academic interest, but also has clear implications for the practice of intelligence analysis, in particular for the current concern for the "battle of ideas", and mobilization of political extremism. Indeed, two of the forefathers of intelligence studies - Sun Tzu and Machiavelli - both argued that when dealing with enemies as well as with allies, it matters more what you are perceived as than what you are; playing with fear and deception is therefore a ubiquitous element in intelligence and counterintelligence.

Moreover, this constructivist approach sheds light on the role of the contemporary intelligence analyst, struggling with how to deal with bureaucratic turf battles, changing world views, and continuous organizational reform. The unavoidably preliminary and contestable nature of intelligence analysis would thus not merely be brushed away with a sloppy "yeah, what else is new?", but taken seriously and explicitly changing demands and expectations. In particular, a constructivist approach focuses not only on the identification of threats, but also highlights *consequences* of security policy and intelligence analysis. If anything, this increases the awareness of the political and cultural environment in which the analyst operates, his/her own identity, as well as the implications of emphasizing and downplaying specific images of threats.

Strategic Intelligence and Soft Power

The EU outside projection is based on the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP), which, in turn, is centered around the so-called

"Petersberg's tasks".³ The EU sees military power, however, as an *ultima ratio* when everything else has failed. Economic pressure (sanctions, financial aid and so on) or diplomacy would be preferable. These are the distinctive traits of what Duchene called a "civilian power". Since Duchene's definition of civilian powers, several authors (Smith, 2005; Telò, 2004; Padoa-Schioppa, 2001; Maull, 1990/91) have further the concept.

In particular, Maull (1990/91) and, later, K. Smith (2005) have singled out the specifics of a civilian power: (a) it should concentrate on non-military means (economic, diplomatic and culture), (b) with emphasis on cooperation and rule of law and (c) on democratic and international supervisions for defense and foreign policymaking.⁴ Significantly, Karen Smith stresses the "use of persuasion", which is, incidentally, the linchpin of soft power (cf. Nye 1990 and 2004).

As McCormick noted (2007: 70), a civilian power, like the EU, will have "a preference for the kind of soft power described by Nye". McCormick's argument is not based on thin air. Eneko Landaburu (Landaburu, 2006: 2), Director General of the EU Commission DG Enlargement, explained that the EU attempts to achieving change in its wider neighborhood "by means of attraction and incentives rather than through coercion..."). Olli Rehn (2007), EU Commissioner for Enlargement observed that "[p]rofessor Joseph S. Nye of Harvard University has defined soft power as the ability to get what you want by attraction rather than coercion. This aptly illustrates the fundamental essence of the power wielded by the EU". Finally, Benita Ferrero-Waldner (2006), EU External Relations Commissioner declared that "...our principal source of power - our power of attraction - is "soft" rather than "hard". But it is no less potent".

³ Petersberg's tasks is the conventional name for the now operational guidelines that the EU follows (or try to) when acting "out of area".

⁴ All of these features are consistent with the Petersberg tasks, of course.

The concept of soft power, as developed by Joseph Nye (1990 and 2004) has been particularly suited for the EU:⁵ the power of attraction of Enlargement, the successful peacekeeping, police and nation-building operations, all conjure up the image of a civilian power that knows how to apply its soft power.⁶ Why is, then, strategic intelligence so central for soft power? The reasons are several.

First, unlike tactical and operational intelligence, which are concerned with what might happen in the near future, strategic intelligence looks at farther trends. The *attracting* rather than *coercing* requires time; it is, most of times, a long-term process. A potential adversary or competitor should become convinced that your advantage is their advantage too. EU enlargement itself, which is often quoted as example of EU soft power, took a decade. It was, actually, during the Cold War, when East European countries could match their wealth and life standard with that of Western Europe, that the long process started. Already at the end of the 1990s, after the EU debacle in Yugoslavia, observers noted that "...significantly higher level of European cooperation, mainly regarding strategic intelligence..." would be required (Becher, 1998).

Second, soft power is closely linked to the intangible concepts (and their indirect influences) such as culture, values, and ideology,⁷ but the *psychological* (cognitive) dimension is central for soft power. Who are the people we are trying to influence and/or

⁵ Although Nye developed first the concept for the United States (1990), he now identifies the EU as the ideal wielder of soft power (2004), much more apt at this type of power than the US itself.

⁶ The soft power of a countries implies, however, that other countries (and their populations) are attracted toward the lifestyle and ideals of that country. The EU record in this area is mixed: if Enlargement is a success, managing immigration is less so. In fact, while immigrants to the United States want to become "Americans" (i.e. to internalize the values the US stands for), this is not the case of immigrants to the EU, where they try to participate in Europe's wealth, but remaining separate and reserving their distinctive identities. EU immigrants do not long to become "Europeans". ADD REF HERE.

⁷ According to Nye (1990 and 2004) Hollywood, media, language and, more in general, lifestyle contribute to the degree of attraction that makes soft power so important. In this respect, however, culture's pivotal role (within soft power) had been identified much earlier by Antonio Gramsci (cf his Prison Notebooks). Gramsci noted that one of the tools that the bourgeoisie had to preserve its hegemony over the proletariat was "education" or "culture". It was then necessary for the proletariat to develop its own form of culture to confront the dominant bourgeoisie. The demise of the latter would begin in the cultural battlefield.

attract? What do they believe in? What are their values and beliefs? As Kenneth Boulding (1950????) and other authors (e.g. Khong, 1992; Irvin, 1982?? Jervis, 1976; George, 1969) have amply showed, misperceptions, images of the other and reputation are key factors that shape how decision-makers (and the governments they are in) see the world and act accordingly.

The key in soft power is concordance of speech and acts: only if the two are consistent, soft power works. If soft power is mismanaged, it leads to misperceptions and tarnishes the image of ours that *the other* has. Once damages occur in such areas, it takes decades to be repaired (cf. Blood, 2005; Andoni, 2003). What other sphere of government activity may need strategic assessment than this one?

When it comes to foreign policy, (Houghton, 2007) convincingly argues that constructivism seems to be a most promising theoretical basis. Strategic intelligence is key for foreign policy planning (including the CSFP). The same reasoning may be applied to the field of intelligence studies and the EU. Since so much of the EU external strategy is based on soft power, it becomes vital for the EU to focus on 'strategic intelligence'. The European Union, as international actor, is uniquely placed to test such arguments in the establishment of its own intelligence service.

Strategic Intelligence and Communication: Practical Implications for the EU

A significant implication that follows from our constructivist approach is that intelligence analysis should be considered as an active form of communication, rather than as a passive collection and interpretation of data. Communication does not only take place between analysts and their immediate "clients" (i.e. colleagues in

the intelligence community, policymakers, and operational units), but also allies, adversaries, the media, and the general public. Thus the basic point is that, whether successful⁸ or not, intelligence analysis is a form of communication, potentially influencing not only the knowledge base of policymaking, but also the worldviews and ultimately the actions of friends, foes, and any other audience. Communication with actors beyond the immediate clients is particularly important for strategic intelligence, since this tends to be closer to policy-making than tactical and operational intelligence, both in style and in content. This is, in short, how intelligence plays an active soft power role.

The practical lesson to be learned from this is that intelligence analysts should develop a conscious communications strategy. Being able to communicate a message, direct this to a variety of audiences, and be aware of unwarranted usage of intelligence analysis, is increasingly important in the complex world of contemporary security policy. Indeed, drawing on vast experience from policy studies, a central lesson is that for analysts to be heard and have a noteworthy impact, advocacy is essential, and thus acting merely as a neutral observers will not be sufficient (Sabatier and Jenkins, 1993).

The communications problem is aggravated by three additional circumstances: information sharing obstacles, the widening of the security concept, and the expectations-capability gap. Obstacles to information sharing have been witnessed for a long time not only in the many-headed hydra that constitutes the American intelligence community, but also in the less sizable yet relatively complex EU intelligence system.

⁸ This is exemplified for instance by the intelligence on al Qaeda's attack plans which did not reach key decision-makers and operational personnel in time before the September 11 attacks, killing more than 3,000 people (see Charles and Stern, 2005). Another example is the seismic indications on boxing day 2004 of a Tsunami which did not lead to any public warnings before the waves hit the beaches in Thailand, Indonesia, Sri Lanka and elsewhere, killing more than 200,000 people.

Currently, the various EU institutions receive intelligence data and analysis from an array of sources, from the domestic to the supranational level. National intelligence services have for many years time developed transgovernmental cooperation, even something of an *esprit de corps*, but turf battles and cultural differences are noteworthy obstacles (Müller-Wille, Björn, 2004: 16).

In addition, organizational complexity is a contributing factor. The EU intelligence system consists *inter alia* of the EU Joint Situation Centre (SITCEN) in the Council's general Secretariat; the Intelligence Division for the EU military staff; the Policy Planning and Early Warning Unit in the High Representative's (Solana's) office; the EU Satellite Center in Torrejon, Spain (originally the WEU Satellite Centre, established in June 1996); and last but not least, Europol, the EU's police and intelligence coordinating agency with its headquarters in The Hague. Of great importance are also the Monitoring and Information Center (MIC), operating "24/7"; a new central network for rapid warning and communication called ARGUS; the emergence of a new Crisis Steering Group (Boin, Ekengren and Rhinard, 2006); the Schengen Information System, the border guards network, OLAF (European Antifraud Office), and Eurojust (magistrates and judicial experts network; cf. Müller-Wille, Björn, 2004). Moreover, though it does not show up as additional units, an increasing number of existing agencies and institutions within the EU have developed an "intelligence support role" (Duke, 2006). It can be argued that regardless of how traditional intelligence agencies react to this challenge, it implies a threat to their "policy monopoly" (cf. Baumgartner and Jones, 1993).

The communications problem is also exacerbated by the widened security concept, incorporating everything from military invasion to terrorism and natural disasters. There are obvious benefits of adopting a comprehensive security concept, for example that it allows for a greater awareness of how a variety of threats are

interconnected regardless of how policy domains are organized. Yet it is noteworthy that the nowadays firmly institutionalized widening of security has implied confusion and also opportunity within a traditionally closed and conceptually conservative field. Agencies within the traditional intelligence community is working hard to adapt itself and help changing this new agenda, at the same time as other agencies, which previously have not talked in terms of intelligence, increasingly are doing so. In short, if the widened threat agenda requires entirely types of which cannot be found within the traditional intelligence community - for example regarding natural catastrophes, pandemics, and migratory patterns - it can safely be assumed that will not only open up for innovative new expert networks (cf. Politi, 1998), but also imply a great deal of confusion.

Finally, the communications problem is worsened by the "expectations-capabilities gap" (Hill, 1993), a curse that besets so many other EU undertakings. In other words, what representatives of the EU and many other stakeholders would like it to do, is not backed up by adequate capabilities. Indeed, the problem might be greater in the "security sector" than in many other domains, since incidents that were not prevented - be they terrorist attacks, pandemics, natural catastrophes or - will tend to be interpreted as "unacceptable failures" (cf. Boin et al, 2005). EU intelligence services also seem to suffer from a "democratic deficit", comparable or perhaps even worse than that which concerns other EU institutions (Müller-Wille, 2006).

Conclusion

Notwithstanding its adolescent military presence in Congo and a few other hotspots, the EU often presents itself as a "civilian power", relying on a mix of economic incentives, technical assistance and public diplomacy to further its interests. The EU has also stressed its preference for "soft power", that is, leading through persuasion, rather than relying on coercion. Not only representatives of the EU, but also scholars like Nye (2004) and McCormick (2006) considers the EU as a champion of soft power. This implies, among other things, focusing on the identity and beliefs of potential friends and foes. And by adopting a constructivist perspective on soft power, attention is paid not only to the "Other", but also introspectively on the changing role of the analyst and the institutional and cultural context in which analysis is being done. This may not only change the mode of intelligence analysis, but also the expectations and demands of this activity.

Moreover, the EU has adopted a widened security concept, which incorporates but also goes beyond violent threats from states and non-state actors. In addition, by adopting a constructivist perspective in which the roles of ideas and identity are emphasized, the soft power and thus communicative element of intelligence analysis come to the fore. In this perspective, intelligence analysis in general, and strategic intelligence in particular, is seen as form of communication, which targets not only immediate "clients" but other audiences as well, including potential adversaries. All of this implies a major challenge for the intelligence community, which traditionally has been associated with the use of hard rather than soft power, and in which the professional ethos has been one of doing objective assessments rather than engaging in battles of ideas and identity, within and beyond its own agencies.

Following a traditional pattern in intelligence studies, thus far most of research on EU intelligence has focused on policy-making, on "how to" develop more effective information-gathering system that would benefit the whole of the Union (Politi, 1997; Müller-Wille, 2004). In his thorough study of EU intelligence, Müller-Wille (2004: ???PG) concludes that "the EU does not need a new intelligence agency..." but, rather, a better coordination of existing agencies. There is good reason to agree with Müller-Wille: organizational reform typically has meant increasing complexity and confusion, not least within the EU.

More important than coordination and dealing with organizational complexity, however, is the need to develop its capacity for strategic intelligence, which is where a constructivist approach in general, and a soft power notion in particular, comes in handy. EU member states and their cooperating agencies are quite apt at gathering what is required for tactical and operational intelligence. Yet if the EU wants to foster its ability to understand the nature, causes and consequences of complex non-traditional threats (including the battles of ideas and identities), as well as the consequences of countermeasures, the traditional realist-rationalistic approaches are out of synch. A pragmatically oriented constructivism seems a more productive choice (cf. Eriksson and Giacomello, 2006).

Finally, we see this paper as an effort to contribute towards the development and application of social science theories in both the practice and the study of intelligence analysis, a field which for so long has been plagued by idiosyncratic studies rich on historical detail, in which theory is ignored or even ridiculed. The price of this is an inability to draw systematic lessons from past events, to be able to discover patterns across time and space. This is not to say that history repeats itself, at least not in every detail, but it is to claim that though the series of events and actors involved may differ considerably, patterns of similar

conditions may arise again. In short, this calls for the development and application of conditional generalizations, or “typological theory” (George and Bennet, 2005), which seems explicitly relevant in such a policy oriented field as intelligence analysis.

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